

Testimony of Gina Maroney  
On Raised Senate Bill No. 317  
March 2, 2016

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

I am writing you to ask for your support of S.B. 317, An Act Concerning Dyslexia, however I believe there needs to be an amendment stating that candidates who seek a remedial reading endorsement should complete a graduate level program, not just a "course" aligned with evidence-based practices and the International Dyslexia Association Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading (<http://eida.org/knowledge-and-practices/>).

This bill, and amending it as stated above, means a lot to me because I have two children who are dyslexic and neither of them has received the appropriate education in our public school system. My daughter, Mary, is currently in 8<sup>th</sup> grade at a private school because at the end of 7<sup>th</sup> grade we learned she was only reading at an instructional 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level. Mary was identified as having a reading disability after my husband and I noticed she was having difficulty keeping up in 1<sup>st</sup> grade and therefore we had her privately evaluated. She started receiving remedial reading services in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade but after six years of remedial reading services she had not made any gains in her reading ability. Please note during this entire time, the public school told us Mary was one year behind her grade level in reading. I blame the system because our teachers have not been given the correct training in evidence-based practices for reading remediation in our Connecticut Institutions of Higher Education.

Knowing that dyslexia has a hereditary component, my husband and I had our son, Matthew, tested privately for dyslexia because he too was struggling with reading. We found out in March, 2015 that he is dyslexic. In April, 2015, Matthew started receiving evidence based instruction in reading and this has continued into 6<sup>th</sup> grade but he can never get back his prior years of not receiving the evidence based reading instruction that he so desperately needed. I feel it was my due diligence as a parent who has been forced into learning more about dyslexia and appropriate reading remediation that has helped my son not be as far behind in his reading as his sister was. This is still to be determined however, because if you remember the public school was not factual in how far behind my daughter was. I believe this is because the teachers in the public school have not been appropriately trained in detection and recognition of students with dyslexia. One "course" will not accomplish this as no two dyslexics are the same. Even my own children have different reading disability profiles.

Another very important fact to keep in mind is the emotional toll the lack of appropriate teacher training takes on the students. My son told me that he does not feel like he "fits" in with school. When I probed him for specifics, he told me it is the "learning part" that he does not fit with. He has friends and socially is as appropriate as any 12 year old boy. My

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daughter has also had difficulty emotionally due to her reading disability and last year the public school put a lot of "blame" on this as to a reason she was not advancing in reading. Instead of a proper remedial reading program, the public school wanted her to go to counseling. She is getting the proper education now and miraculously, all of her "social and emotional" problems the public school wanted to blame have gone away.

Our Connecticut students deserve better. They deserve to have teachers who are properly trained by completing a graduate level program with evidence-based practices aligned with the International Dyslexia Association Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading.

As a resident in the State of Connecticut, I request your support of S.B. 317, An Act Concerning Dyslexia with amendments as stated above.

Sincerely,

Gina Maroney, parent

New Hartford, CT 06057